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DUMB IN JUNE

By

Richard Burton

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DUMB IN JUNE

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DUMB IN JUNE

RICHARD BURTON



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1896



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THE LYRIC POET'S APOLOGY

I strive to probe to other hearts, and find
 I do but fret the phantom of mine own ;
I strain to paint great Nature, and my mind
 But images itself in every zone.
The lesson learned, I sing Life's woven lay
In syllables of Self, and can no other way.

DUMB IN JUNE
AND OTHER
POEMS



DUMB IN JUNE

I

Ah, the thought hurts at my heart,
Ah, the thought is death to singing,
Dumb in June! to lack the art,
The divine deep impulse bringing
Power and passion in their train ;
To perceive the subtile wane
Of the waters erstwhile springing
Buoyant, brimful on the shore ;
Ebb-tide now for evermore!
Song-tide o'er, no mounting moon
With her white lures to the sea
Surging once from depths of me,
Till the earth and sky seemed ringing
With the wild waves' melody,
With their large, unfettered tune ;
Dumb in June!

DUMB IN JUNE

II

Yet by sea and by land,
In the water-wooded marshes or meadows
wide-reaching and bland,
The summer is regal and rich, the summer
on every hand
Spills largesses splendid to mortals, to
women and men.

For when
Is the breeze sweeter fraught with the
breath of the hay,
Is the thrush-note more calm or the robin's
loud lay
More blithe, or the rose more the queen
of the day?

Now say,
What month is more bounteous in beauties,
in balms,

In lyrics, in psalms,
In gold-heart fair fancies of sunset, and
calms
Of twilight, or after-glows wondrously
clear?

One may hear
The booming of bees and the brook's lulled
refrain,

DUMB IN JUNE

The stream's liquid epic, the grasshopper's
plain,
The frog's bass reiterant languor at night,
The day-long and dark-long sound-woof,
interplight
With dreamings and memories somber or
bright.

And yet,
Oh, regret,

Oh, pain that is death doubly keen,
The Goddess of Song will not stead me,
al-be she hath seen
My anguish, my voiceless despair i' the
midst of the green
And glorious season that shimmers and
sparkles and blows ;

Will not grant me the boon
Of a single brief air that is born as the
violet grows
In the woods, shy-withdrawn from the outer
world's welter and woes,
To the sound of the treetops' dim croon.
I am dumb, be it morning or noontide or
eve ;
'Tis a thought that must haunt me and bid
me to grieve,

Dumb in June !

DUMB IN JUNE

III

A very miracle,
I saw a moment gone :
A honeysuckle, vine and bloom,
Lustrous green and coral red,
I glimpsed above my head
Shedding a rapt perfume.
And then this marvel fell
That I would dwell upon :
A bird — nay, rather say an airy sprite
Compact of color, light,
And a most ravishing power of flight,
Darted from nowhere, somewhere,
And alighted there,
And sat at gaze a moment or twain,
And then was off again.
Not Wordsworth's cuckoo were a dearer
guest
Unto my quest,
So insubstantial, spirit small
And fleetsome in his call ;
Ah, ye know well
It was the humming-bird whereof I tell,
But there I drowsed, nor might with song
commune,
Dumb to this visitant frolicsome,
Dumb in June !

DUMB IN JUNE

IV

This mother-month of Summer holds her
place

Not only by the grace

Attending on her many winsome ways, —

Her flower-gifts, her bird-lays,

Her bridal form and face, —

But by what went before and cometh after ;

April tears, May blooms and laughter,

September's blazonry, and then October

Fruit-ripe and hushed and most imperially
sober

With sense of harvest dignity and worth.

Thus, memory and expectation,

Spring-gleams, fruitions of the fall,

Encircle June and give unto her station

A reverend look, a light historical ;

Child, maiden, matron, she is each and all :

A poet must do her homage — but alas !

The good days come and pass,

Therewith the knowledge they are over
soon,

Yet from my pipe the vibrancy is fled,

I may not music wed,

But fain must lie grief-stricken in the grass,

Dumb, dumb in June.

DUMB IN JUNE

V

Now cease the querulous lament
Of weakling discontent !
All things must by their living learn to
know

The blight of silence, dearth and snow
That covers up the goodship of the flowers.

Our mortal hours
Are shapen so ; perchance when trees are
bare
And ice-tipped daggers hurtle through the
air

And death is everywhere,
My lips shall be loosened for song, and the
lyre

Soft-touched with ethereal fire

Shall quiver, suspire
Sweet harmonies, motions ecstatic and
higher

Than any the loftiest pitch of my hope ;
Perchance neither snow-time nor rose-time
gives scope

To the music pent in me, in each seeking
soul ;

May be that our goal,
Our altar for singing lies elsewhere, afar,

THE CITY

In a dream, in a star,
And the slow-working leaven
Of years shall make mortal immortally
strong

For song,
For full hymning in Heaven !

May it be,

May the summers be strewn
With hints and foretokens for heartening
of me
And hosts of my brothers, who yearn for
the voice

Wherewith to rejoice,

Yet nathless remain

Year through and life through and ever again
Song numb, song dumb,
Dumb in June !

THE CITY

They do neither plight nor wed
In the city of the dead,
In the city where they sleep away the hours ;
But they lie, while o'er them range
Winter-blight and summer change,

DUMB IN JUNE

And a hundred happy whisperings of
flowers.

No, they neither wed nor plight,
And the day is like the night,
For their vision is of other kind than ours.

They do neither sing nor sigh,
In that burgh of by and by
Where the streets have grasses growing
cool and long ;
But they rest within their bed,
Leaving all their thoughts unsaid,
Deeming silence better far than sob or song.
No, they neither sigh nor sing,
Though the robin be a-wing,
Though the leaves of autumn march a
million strong.

There is only rest and peace
In the City of Surcease
From the failings and the wailings 'neath
the sun,
And the wings of the swift years
Beat but gently o'er the biers,
Making music to the sleepers every one.
There is only peace and rest ;

ACROSS THE FIELDS TO ANNE

But to them it seemeth best,
For they lie at ease and know that life is
done.

ACROSS THE FIELDS TO ANNE

From Stratford-on-Avon a lane runs westward
through the fields a mile to the little village of Shot-
tery, in which is the cottage of Anne Hathaway,
Shakspeare's sweetheart and wife.

How often in the summer-tide,
His graver business set aside,
Has stripling Will, the thoughtful-eyed,
As to the pipe of Pan
Stepped blithesomely with lover's pride
Across the fields to Anne !

It must have been a merry mile,
This summer stroll by hedge and stile,
With sweet foreknowledge all the while
How sure the pathway ran
To dear delights of kiss and smile,
Across the fields to Anne.

The silly sheep that graze to-day,
I wot, they let him go his way,
Nor once looked up, as who should say :

DUMB IN JUNE

“It is a seemly man.”

For many lads went wooing aye
Across the fields to Anne.

The oaks, they have a wiser look ;
Mayhap they whispered to the brook :
“The world by him shall yet be shook,
It is in nature’s plan ;
Though now he fleets like any rook
Across the fields to Anne.”

And I am sure, that on some hour
Coquetting soft ’twixt sun and shower,
He stooped and broke a daisy-flower
With heart of tiny span,
And bore it as a lover’s dower
Across the fields to Anne.

While from her cottage garden-bed
She plucked a jasmine’s goodlihede,
To scent his jerkin’s brown instead ;
Now since that love began,
What luckier swain than he who sped
Across the fields to Anne?

The winding path whereon I pace,
The hedgerows green, the summer’s grace,

OF ONE AFFLICTED

Are still before me face to face ;
Methinks I almost can
Turn poet and join the singing race
Across the fields to Anne !

OF ONE AFFLICTED WITH DEAFNESS

She moves about the house with meek content,
Her face is like a psalm from other years ;
She only guesses half of what is meant,
But hides her impotence, her natural tears.

Whenso we gather close for jest or tale
She shuns the circle, lest it fret our mood
To raise our voices till our joyance fail ;
She sits apart in patient quietude.

And though we try to make her lot more
bright,
To set her in our midst and show her
love
(For she is lovesome), yet few glimpse
aright
Her desolation and the cross thereof.

DUMB IN JUNE

Dear God, may recompense be hers from
Thee ;

May melodies from days gone by come
back

To fill her silence, and a symphony
Played soft, of angels, soothe her sorry
lack,

That, while she sits and makes no least
demur,

Left much to loneliness and forced apart,
She have companionship to comfort her,
And hear a constant singing in her heart.

IF WE HAD THE TIME

If I had the time to find a place

And sit me down full face to face

With my better self, that cannot show

In my daily life that rushes so :

It might be then I would see my soul

Was stumbling still toward the shining
goal,

I might be nerved by the thought sub-
lime, —

If I had the time !

IF WE HAD THE TIME

If I had the time to let my heart
Speak out and take in my life a part,
 To look about and to stretch a hand
 To a comrade quartered in no-luck
 land ;

Ah, God ! If I might but just sit still
And hear the note of the whip-poor-will,
 I think that my wish with God's
 would rhyme —
 If I had the time !

If I had the time to learn from you
How much for comfort my word could do ;
 And I told you then of my sudden
 will
 To kiss your feet when I did you ill ;
If the tears aback of the coldness feigned
Could flow, and the wrong be quite ex-
plained, —

 Brothers, the souls of us all would
 chime,

 If we had the time !

DUMB IN JUNE

SAINT CECILIA

A woman with a charmed hand
To wake sweet music, — yea, a saint
Whose home is in the mystic land
Where poets sing and painters paint.

She wears a soft and Old-World grace,
Her eyes are large with revery ;
Her solemn organ fills the place
With sounds that set the spirit free.

The lily is her flower, and meek
Her look is, as the flower's own ;
She hath no color in her cheek,
One thinks of her as oft alone.

Rubens once wrought her, playing there,
And made her beautiful, yet missed
The holiness, the pensive air
Of one whose face high heaven has kissed.

And Carlo Dolci tried, nor failed :
Cecilia sits and plays, and seems
A saint whose soul is unassailed,
And yet the woman of our dreams !

IN A CITY PARK

IN A CITY PARK

A stretch of lawn as smooth as happiness,
• And tender green withal, and dappled
o'er
With shadows that the birches throw,
unless
A maple here and there throws shadows
more.
Beyond, the houses, spires, toilings, din,
And all that makes a cityful of sin.

And yet the sun's ashine, and, somehow,
from
Uhis common scene, that's trying to be
fair,
There's something rises in the city's hum,
There's something brooding o'er the
smoke and blare,
That makes the place and time and people
seem
A beauty, and a promise, and a dream.

DUMB IN JUNE

VALUES

I make appraisal of the maiden moon
For what she is to me :
Not a great globe of cheerless stone
That hangs in awful space alone,
And ever so to be ;
But just the rarest orb,
The very fairest orb,
The star most lovely-wise
In all the dear night-skies !

So thou to me, O jestful girl of June !
I have no will to hear
Cold calculations of thy worth
Summed up in beauty, brain, and birth :
Such coldly strike mine ear.
Thou art the rarest one,
The very fairest one,
The soul most lovely-wise
That ever looked through eyes !

DAY LABORERS

DAY LABORERS

They straggle down the street ; the morn-
ing light

Is on their shiftless steps, their shoulders
bent ;

They work with sinews lame — a grievous
sight

Of waning strength, of hope and courage
spent.

It seems sardonic thus to set them here,
Old men and weary, in the day's fresh
hour.

What solace can be theirs, what sense of
cheer,

What puissant thought, what dream of
transient power ?

Few sadder things on earth than toilsome
age

Without its dignities, its honored hairs ;

A time of vacant mind and vassalage

Before the last grim change from mortal
cares.



DUMB IN JUNE

And yet one benison the pilgrims know:
For mother-church receives them, makes
 them glad
With pomps and promises, yea, sets aglow
 These human hearts the sorry week-long
 sad.

And I can bless her reverend ways and wise
 (Although in other symbols I am bred),
Since she doth wipe the tears from piteous
 eyes
And leaveth not the poor uncomforted.

A POTION

How brew the brave drink Life?
Take of the herb hight morning-joy,
Take of the herb hight evening-rest,
 Pour in pain lest bliss should cloy,
Shake in sin to give it zest;
Brew them all in the heat of noon,
Cool the broth beneath the moon;
Then down with the brave drink Life!

TWO MOUNTAINS

TWO MOUNTAINS

Monadnock looms against the pale blue
dome

Of sky, a monarch crowned with cloud
and sun ;

Massive the moeds of this rock-ribbèd
one

In ways of God that seemeth most at
home ;

An archetypal art those contours made,
An elemental brush the colors laid.

Type of New England, creature of her
womb,

Rugged yet beautiful, thy fearless front
Preaches old freedom, and her sturdy wont
And purity and faith and living-room ;
Fore-elder, thou, of simpler, saner days
When God meant prayer and Fatherland
meant praise.

So Emerson, whose land was made to thee
In words of bardic wonder, was a peak
Sprung from the same dear soil, and fain to
speak

DUMB IN JUNE

Faced skyward towards the heavens' clarity ;
The same New England gave him goodly
 birth,
The same large mood, the same untired
 earth.

Anak of hills that take the questing eye,
Great dominant thing in all this landscape
 wide,
'Twas meet that thou shouldst thus be
 magnified
By him, that strength to strength should
 make reply :
Monadnock, moveless, whatsoe'er the wind,
Like Emerson midst shifts of humankind.

THE AWAKENING

The beauties of the world do master me :
 They put my soul in such a heavy swoon
I may not sing of half the love I see
 Beneath the sun, beneath the lady moon.
Love, wake me from this languor deep,
 that I
May truly sing of beauty ere I die.

THE AWAKENING

Wake me by bending down thy dreamful
face

And touching lips to mine swoon-
bounden ; then

My soul shall leap and quiver in its place,

And I shall turn the mightiest of men,

A master there, with Earth and Sky my
slave,

Because of that one kiss my mistress gave.

Day's sweetest flower shall witness to me
make,

Night's boldest star send messages of fire,

And all the birds that be, for love's sole
sake,

Shall quicken wing to come at my desire ;

While hearts of humankind hot-beating,
cold,

Draw nigh and house with me till days are
old.

The morning's challenge in the changeful
east —

A challenge to the heart to live anew —

Shall steal into whatever words the least

My song shall fashion tenderly and true.

DUMB IN JUNE

The wonder of the sundown in the west
Shall shine again, and so be twice expressed.

The sweetest sounds of music shall unite
My dreams to sister-dreams, as rosaries
Of carven beads are set and strung aright
Upon some silken cord sad nuns to
please :
Each lovesome thought shall find a liquid
sound,
And Love be doubly Love so set around.

The open fields shall offer honest cheer,
The woods, wind-shaken, sing a wel-
come-song,
And every wight who haunts the wood-
lands dear
Shall rate me as a mate to shield from
wrong.
The sea the secret of his monotone,
An age-old thing, to me will tell alone.

Such powers shall be mine because you
came
And kissed me once ; whereat the deep-
est bliss

THE RIVER

That ever mortal knew ran swift aflame
Straight to my soul, and taught me only
this :
To step into the very deep of Love
And make my nest and sing the joy thereof.

THE RIVER

There was a mighty river that I knew
In time long-by ; it made me hold my
breath
To watch its wondrous ways — so wide it
grew,
So plain the darker eddies spoke of death,
The lads that dared to swim it were so few !
Man grown, to-day I muse the stream
beside,
And smile, remembering — for 'tis a
span
And nothing more to reach across its tide,
While in the blackest pools your eye may
scan
The bottom, where the minnows hunt and
hide.

DUMB IN JUNE

Mayhap the rivers will not shrink to streams,
In that dim land that lies beyond our dreams.

THE PASSING OF THE BIRDS

From out the heart of an autumnal day
A sound unwonted took the listening ear ;
At first dim in the sky and far away,
But ever waxing louder and more clear.

And then a mighty shadow seemed to come
Between the sun and me, and all the air
Shook vibrantly, gave forth a grave, great
hum,
Till heaven became a populous thorough-
fare

Of strenuous wings that beat the blue in
time ;
Birds numberless, yet one in joy of flight
And the desire to make a warmer clime
Wherein to mate and nest and have
delight.

A hundred wind-harps played in unison
Their passing was, a sight of buoyancy

OCTOBER

Beyond us earthlings ; of my memories, one
Most fraught with sense of fetterless
grace and glee.

OCTOBER

Now is the world a-muse, and earth and sky
Are in a pact of uttermost content ;
Pan's mood is pensive, Beauty passes by
With steps loath-lingering and all be-
sprent
With colors o'er her garments of Delight,
Along the stream and up the mountain
height.

The shocks of corn stand ghostly gray a-row,
Weird Indian chiefs who brood on tribal
wrongs
And ultimate requital ; all aglow
Is every swamp with maples, and the
songs
Of crickets blend in most harmonious wise
Into the azure landscape's dreams and dyes.
The yellowing birches and the elms do
make

DUMB IN JUNE

The road a slumbrous way through
wonderland ;
The sumach startles you to wide-awake,
So vivid is her crimson ; nigh at hand
Or far afield the dog-wood burns, and fills
With witchery of garnet wolds and hills.

Like fire the huckleberry vines across
The meadows run ; soft sleep the gray
old stones,
The fences in their eld of time and moss,
Save when all-blazoned by the clambering
zones
Of woodbine, magical for shaded reds :
Hard by the asters lift their bloomy heads.

Beside bronzed oaks the fruity chestnuts
drop
Their glossy burthens down, a sylvan
scene ;
Granges innumerable groan as crop
On crop is gathered in ; the air is keen
With scent of smoke, the pied leaves fall
to earth
In ruddy troops, for burial and rebirth.

THE VANISHED VOICE

O splendid beauty of the day ! O eve
Made luminous by the punctual harvest
moon,
The sun's close comrade ! weave and inter-
weave
Your changes, for the season shifts o'er-
soon,
Evanishing while still we deem it here ;
Such transient loveliness is twofold dear.

Now is the year's recessional ; for though
Her robes are richer-wrought than in the
spring
What time the proud procession paced slow
Up the vast church of Nature's fashion-
ing,
Soon moans — these pulsing pomps left far
behind —
Down unillumined aisles the requiem wind.

THE VANISHED VOICE

There stood a tree beside his boyhood's
door
That faced the west, and often, just before

DUMB IN JUNE

The sundown, seemed transfigured with
the light
That flooded in, and keen upon his sight
Burned images of flame. And from the
tree
Fluted a nameless bird so goldenly
He seemed part of the sunset and the sky.

The listener has listened for that cry
Of love and longing many a weary time
And heard it never, nor can mortal rhyme
Encompass all its sweetness : could the
place,
The homely homestead and the subtle grace
Of youth return, the magic moment when
The western sun shows heaven to earth-
doomed men,
But transiently, perchance the chanting
bird
Would be there too, perchance his voice
were heard.

The listener listens vainly ; song is rife
Still in the world, still love illumines life ;
But he would give the all of after years,
Its triumphs, wisdoms, and revealing tears,

YESTERDAY

To list that little bird-soul from its nest
Leap into lyric rapture, sink to rest,
Youth in the air and sunset in the west.

YESTERDAY

My friend, he spoke of a woman face ;
It puzzled me, and I paused to think.
He told of her eyes and mouth, the trace
Of prayer on her brow, and quick as
wink

I said : " Oh yes, but you wrong her years.
She's only a child, with faiths and fears
That childhood fit. I tell thee nay ;
She was a girl just yesterday."

" The years are swift and sure, I trow "
(Quoth he). " You speak of the long
ago."

Once I strolled in a garden spot,
And every flower upraised a head
(So it seemed), for they, I wot,
Were mates of mine ; each bloom and
bed,
Their hours for sleep, their merry mood,

DUMB IN JUNE

The lives and deaths of the whole sweet
brood,
Were known to me ; it was my way
To visit them but yesterday.

Spake one red rose, in a language low :
“ We saw you last in the long ago.”

Entering under the lintel wide,
I saw the room ; 'twas all the same :
The oaken press and the shelves aside,
The window small for the sunset flame,
The book I loved on the table large ;
I ope'd, and lo ! in the yellow marge
The leaf I placed was shrunk and gray.
I swear it was green but yesterday !

Then a voice stole out of the sunset glow :
“ You lived here, man, in the long ago.”

'Tis the same old tale, though it comes to
me
By a hundred paths of pain and glee,
Till I guess the truth at last, and know
That Yesterday is the Long Ago.

COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION

Within the desert, cowed and vigil-worn,
The eremite in prayer and fasting bides ;
All world-delights his holy thinkings scorn :
The Book, the crucifix, his only guides.

But on a morn when flamed the rising sun
And scared the panther from the open
plain,
The eremite, his night-time watching done,
Broke bread, and would his missal con
again.

Then came a thought and slunk into his
mind,
Compounded half of lust and half of
hate ;
And for an hour his soul was sick and
blind,
And he a worldling moaning at his fate.

While in a city's most unholy place,
There came unto a knave, a tippling clod,
A thought as tender as a child's small face,
And white as is the vestiture of God.

DUMB IN JUNE

DAY AND NIGHT

The day is a fair young hind,
Gracile, with life athrill ;
She comes on feet of the wind
When the light leaps over the hill.

The night is a huge black hound
As foul as the hind is fair,
And he hunts her beauty to ground
Till the morning sun cries *Ware !*

SCHOOLBOYS

I could wish that death might come
Like the respite to a task,
Or a holiday hard-won.
Life's long schooling burdensome
Over now, so we may bask
In a sense of duty done ;
In a sense of freedom wide
Opening out on every side

Like to lads, who count the days
To the glad vacation time,

IN THE SHADOWS

While their hearts go truanting ;
Though they walk appointed ways
Duteously, the home-bells chime
In their ears, the home-birds sing,
And they hear their cronies call
To some game or festival.

IN THE SHADOWS

As the shadows filled the room with peace,
We spoke of our absent friends :
How some were dead and some were sped
To the far-away earth ends.

And by some magic of yearning hearts,
The lost seemed warm and near ;
Yea, loved so much we could almost touch
Their hands and feel them here.

And when the lamps were lit, and speech
Waxed merrier, yet the place
Felt strangely bare, and each one there
Missed some belovèd face.

DUMB IN JUNE

SEA-PICTURES

FAR NIENTE

Soft languors on the bosom of the deep,
A blissful swoon that takes the sense in
thrall ;
My hopes are dead, my memory is asleep,
I only lie and watch the waters fall
And lift, and let my tired spirit steep
In sun and sea, as happy as a hound
That lazes on a plot of grassy ground ;
Until the dim night shadows come and
creep
Between the day and me, and end it all.

NIGHT NOISES

No voice of crickets wearing through the
night
From skeins of dew in scented summer
fields ;
No sleep-time chirp of birds, no tree that
yields
A solemn sigh when touched by breezes
light.
Instead, a throb of engines in their might,

SEA-PICTURES

The scurrying seamen with their weird
Yo-ho !

The creak of ropes, the lapping of sad
waves,

That seem to grieve above forgotten graves,
And gossip on lost ships of long ago.

OFF THE HAVEN

Up stole a fog, a chill and ghastly thing,
That gloomed the sea and hid her face
from me ;

My soul was like a bird with broken wing ;
A dismal bell warned homing barks
away.

Then shot a sun-shaft ; like a phantom
host,

Born of the night and mailed in sullen
white,

The riven mists drew off, and lo ! the coast
Lay green and glad beyond the waters
gray.

DUMB IN JUNE

SONG AND SINGER

I saw him once, the while he sat and
played —

A stripling with a shock of yellow hair —
His own rare songs, in mirth or sorrow
made,
But tender all, and fair.

And as the years rolled by I saw him not,
But still his songs full many a time I sung,
And thought of him as one who has the lot
To be forever young.

Until at last he stood before mine eyes
An age-bent man, who trembled o'er his
staff ;
My sight rebelled to see him in such guise,
Ripe for his epitaph.

I grieved with grief that to a death belongs ;
How Time is stern I had forgot, in truth,
And how that men wax old, whereas their
songs
Keep an immortal youth.

MARCH DAYS

MARCH DAYS

I

The world to-day is a nun in gray,
And the wind is her wailing prayer
To God, to give her a soul like May,
Flower-sweet, white, and fair.

II

Still as a lake at even is the air ;
The heavens are hid ; I mark not any-
where
A hopeful sign hung out by plain or hill ;
Only the etched brown trees and barren
fields are there.

How like a madman's dream the thought
of June !
Shall this warped pipe e'er swell with
some soft tune
That calls for liquid stops and languorous
skill,
The piper lying prone beneath a summer
moon ?

DUMB IN JUNE

III

The mystery
And magic of the spring !
It seizes on this bleak and sullen thing
Called March, and see !
Bland skies, faint odors as of slumbering
flowers,
Faint bird songs in the bowers,
A soft south wind, and, cradled in the
wood,
As sweet as womanhood,
As shy as any maiden lured by love,
The dimly flushed arbutus bloom above
The harsh earth soon will peer,
And April airs be here !

IN DELIRIUM

Lying in delirium,
Fancies strange do flockwise come ;
Happy thoughts and bitter some.

Now I rest on azure seas
Bathed in light, and hear the wail

IN DELIRIUM

Of the waves, and seem to feel
Languid lappings at the keel
Of my boat, the while a breeze
Pushes gently at the sail.

Now I grope through rayless mines
Searching for a gem whose beam
I may use to guide me fair
To the upper world of air ;
Search in vain for any signs
Of its heart of fiery gleam.

Now, again, I toss among
Clouds that are with thunders charged ;
There amid the elements
All my soul and all my sense
Seems heroic grown, my tongue
Touched with fire, my life enlarged.

I am borne unto a place
Like a paradise for flowers,
Shade and sun, to hear aloft
Dreamy songs and snatches soft,
While below, a mystic bass
Chants with measured beat the hours.

DUMB IN JUNE

I am in the daylit street
Of a city, and my hand
Suddenly is grasped by one
On whose grave the snow and sun
Years and years have blown and beat
Since he sought the Silent Land.

But to one strange spot I must
E'er return, and ever find
What must always bring to me
Lack of ease, and agony,
Till the day that I am dust,
All my anguish left behind.

This it is : I see my love
Holding forth beseeching arms,
'Tired in white, and near as wan
As the robe she rests upon ;
See a fearful storm above
Swooping swift, and big with harms.

Yet I may not move, nor go
One sweet step to comfort her ;
Chains are on me, till I cry :
Let me free or let me die !

UNAFRAID

God, the white face begging so !
God, my limbs that may not stir !

Lying in delirium,
Fancies strange do flockwise come ;
Happy thoughts and bitter some.

UNAFRAID

A dialect beyond our ken,
The accents of an unknown tongue,
Life speaks, — this world of passing men
That is incomparably old
And sad with sinning manifold,
Yet, with each morning, sweet and
young.

Yea, sweet and young it is, and plain
Its meaning, — for a girl's light breath
Outwits the wisdom that has lain
Long centuries stored in reverend books.
They doubt and dream ; she, by her looks,
Laughs down the lie of churlish death.

DUMB IN JUNE

THE COMFORT OF THE STARS

When I am overmatched by petty cares
And things of earth loom large, and
look to be
Of moment, how it soothes and comforts
me
To step into the night and feel the airs

Of heaven fan my cheek ; and, best of all,
Gaze up into those all-uncharted seas
Where swim the stately planets : such as
these
Make mortal fret seem light and temporal.

I muse on what of Life may stir among
Those spaces knowing naught of metres
nor bars ;
Undreamed-of dramas played in outmost
stars,
And lyrics by archangels grandly sung.

I grow familiar with the solar runes
And comprehend of worlds the mystic
birth :

THE COMFORT OF THE STARS

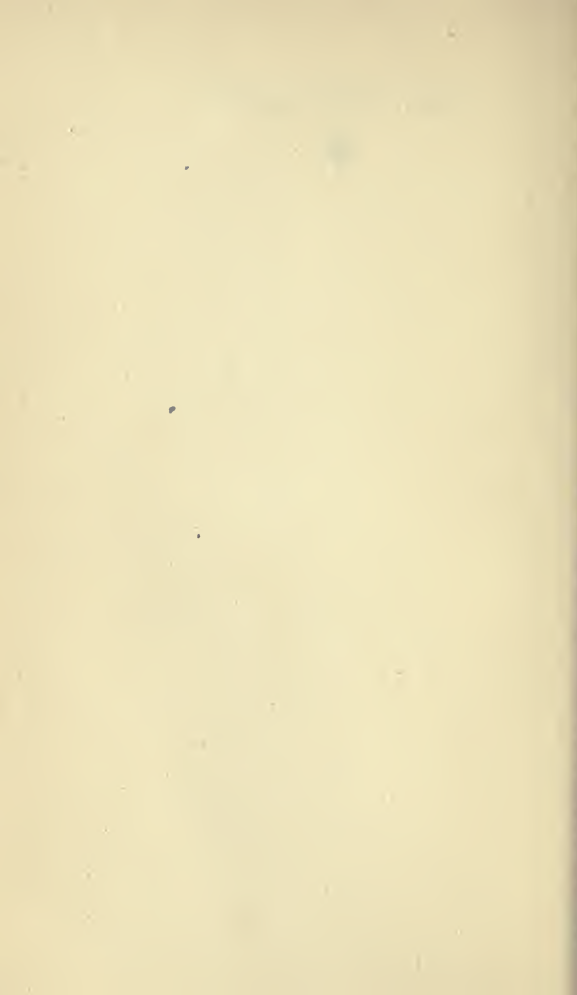
Ringed Saturn, Mars, whose fashion apes
the earth,
And Jupiter, the giant, with his moons.

Then, dizzy with the unspeakable sights
above,
Rebuked by Vast on Vast, my puny
heart

Is greatened for its transitory part,
My trouble merged in wonder and in love.

FROM THE GARDEN





I

A SPRING THOUGHT

In the spring I have leaned me full close to
the bark of a tree,
To know if its heart were athrob with spring
passion and glee,
And found that its longing was like to the
longing in me.

In the spring I have bent to the odorous lips
of a rose,
Await for the summer her virginal heart to
unclose,
And found her full fain of the spring-tide
that blossoms and blows.

In the spring I have harked to the bounti-
ful song of a bird
Outbreathing his joyance as plainly as ever
man heard,
Albeit his bliss be not caught in a crystal-
line word.

And so, when they tell me the bird-song,
the rose, and the beat

DUMB IN JUNE

In the turbulent heart of the tree are sense-
less though sweet
Revealments of nature, spring-stirred by the
spirit of heat,

I laugh in my heart as one laugheth who
knoweth the best ;
And never I trust to such testaments cold,
but I rest
In the secrets the bird and the rose and the
tree have confessed.

II

STILL DAYS AND STORMY

Yesterday the wind blew
Down the garden walks :
Marigolds, the day through,
Trembled on their stalks.

But to-day the wind's dead,
Marigolds are still :
Miss they what the wind said ?
Do they take it ill ?

TWO ROSES

Yesterday my love stood
Hearkening to me ;
Fair flower of womanhood,
All a-tremble she.

But to-day she's sad, still,
Makes no true-love sign :
Is her lover to her will ?
Is she yet mine ?

III

TWO ROSES

A wild rose spake to a city rose :
“ How sad is your lot, your life !
You miss the kiss of the wind that blows
In the open field, where the glad stream
flows,
And the days with summer rife.”

The city flower softly smiled,
For she knew what things are best :

DUMB IN JUNE

“How little you dream of love, poor
child !
What time you are out in the tempest
wild,
I sleep on my lady's breast.”

IV

A MEADOW FANCY

In the meadows yonder the wingèd wind
Makes billows along the grain ;
With their sequence swift they bring to
mind
The swash of the open main,
Till I smell the pungent brine, and hear —
Mine eyes grown dim — the cry
Of the sailor lads, and feel vague fear
Of the storm-wrack in the sky.

GOD'S GARDEN

V

GOD'S GARDEN

The years are flowers and bloom within
Eternity's wide garden ;
The rose for joy, the thorn for sin,
The gardener God, to pardon
All wilding growths, to prune, reclaim,
And make them rose-like in His name.

VI

THE FLOWER OF SEVEN CHANGES

(The hydrangea is so called by the Japanese.)

At first, in early days
Of summer-time, a blossoming of blooms
Rich-tinted, delicate-dyed, as if the looms
That wove it whirled in chambers dim
with haze,
In secretest fair rooms

DUMB IN JUNE

Of wonder and delight and rare designs,
Wrought marvelous in hues and lovely
lines.

And then bland hours, wherein
The pink grows into purple, fades to flame
Likest to fire, yet never twice the same ;
Some petals white as love, some swart as
sin,
Subtle, inconstant, luring human eyes
By soft evanishment and slow surprise.

Thereto a somber mood
Of duns and smoke-touched textures,
dreamy glints,
With here and there for memory, warmer
hints
Of rose, or sunset yellow's quietude.
This is her season of most calm release
From mid-June passion ; it is large with
peace.

Follows thereon a spell
Of wraith-like flowers, aspen-thin and pale,
Inwove with autumn reveries, the wail
Of wind in leafless boughs a fitting knell

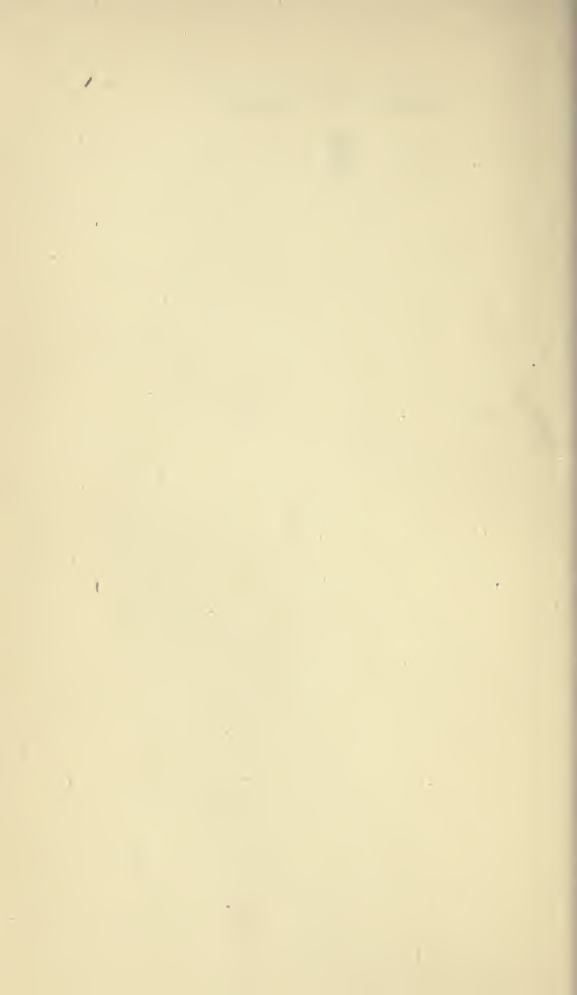
THE FLOWER OF CHANGES

Above her sometime splendor ; yet a sight
Ineffably harmonious, vaguely bright.

And last, a death so still
And all unviolent, you scarcewise miss
The presence by the door, nor reckon this
A perished beauty and a thwarted will.
Nor is it : with the spring, behold her here,
Protean, vital in the vernal year !

A GROUP OF SONGS





I

THE FIRST SONG

A poet writ a song of May
That checked his breath awhile ;
He kept it for a summer day,
Then spake with half a smile :

“ Oh, little song of purity,
Of mystic to-and-fro,
You are so much a part of me
I dare not let you go.”

And so he made a sister-song
With more of cunning art ;
But held the first his whole life long
Deep hidden in his heart.

DUMB IN JUNE

II

SONG IN ABSENCE

As a poet's rhyme-word looks and loving
 leans
 To the sister rhyme-word, set in the line
 below,
My heart, in the late sun's blaze, in her
 yellow sheens,
 To you would leaping go.

As a miner delves in the cool and dew-
 drained earth
 For the gold to grace his lady's loveliness,
My dreamings delve thy soul to know its
 worth
 And doubt the angels less.

As a sea-bird, stayed by hindering hands
 ashore,
 Droops wing, her head yet holden toward
 the sea,
Sore-sick to burst her bonds and waveward
 soar,
 So yearns my soul to thee.

A SONG OF MEETING

If so that thou but me-ward turn as well,
Love-longing like to mine within `thy
heart,
There's neither peace of heaven, nor pain
of hell
Shall keep us twain apart.

III

A SONG OF MEETING

In the dales of a distant valley,
Where never a word is said,
Where never a wind makes sally,
And memory e'en is dead ;

At a time when the light is breaking
Over the dawn-touched deep,
At a time when the dreams of waking
Are mixed with the dreams of sleep ;

With the face and the old behavior
I loved in the long ago,
When you were my soul and savior,
With the face and the form I know —

DUMB IN JUNE

'Tis thus, dear heart, I would greet you,
Through tears of a joy divine ;
'Tis thus, dear heart, I would meet you,
And make you forever mine !

IV

SONG OF THE SEA

The song of the sea was an ancient song
In the days when the earth was young ;
The waves were gossiping loud and long
Ere mortals had found a tongue ;
The heart of the waves with wrath was wrung
Or soothed to a siren strain,
As they tossed the primitive isles among
Or slept in the open main.
Such was the song and its changes free,
Such was the song of the sea.

The song of the sea took a human tone
In the days of the coming of man ;
A mournfuller meaning swelled her moan,
And fiercer her riots ran ;
Because that her stately voice began
To speak of our human woes ;

SONG OF THE SEA

With music mighty to grasp and span
Life's tale and its passion-throes.
Such was the song as it grew to be,
Such was the song of the sea.

The song of the sea was a hungry sound
As the human years unrolled ;
For the notes were hoarse with the doomed
and drowned,
Or choked with a shipwreck's gold :
Till it seemed no dirge above the mould
So sorry a story said
As the midnight cry of the waters old
Calling above their dead.
Such is the song and its threnody,
Such is the song of the sea.

The song of the sea is a wondrous lay,
For it mirrors human life ;
It is grave and great as the judgment day,
It is torn with the thought of strife ;
Yet under the stars it is smooth and rife
With love-lights everywhere,
When the sky has taken the deep to wife
And their wedding-day is fair —
Such is the ocean's mystery,
Such is the song of the sea.

DUMB IN JUNE

V

HEARTH SONG

Before the hearth I dream of many things.
The red-eyed embers glow, dull down,
expire ;
An evanescent life in each, that brings
Sad omens for the Life that men desire.
Will it not end in ashes, like the fire ?

Not death is here, but change ! Each spark
that gleams
Is pent-up sunlight, and the back-log's
tune
Repeats the music of the woods and
streams.
Bend low and listen ; it is Nature's rune,
Singing of summer, chanting soft of June.

DAYBREAK SONG

VI

DAYBREAK SONG

Full sweet is the night locust-haunted,
 moon-kist,
The noontide, strong creature and
 splendid;
But dawn has a loveliness blended
Of health and keen hope and a puissant
 delight
In living, that shameth the languor of night
Or stress of the noon with its urgency and
 plight.

And so, when I list,
 Shaking slumber and sleep from mine
 eyes,
Soft somnolence scorning,
 I love to be under the skies,
 I long to be up and away,
 I lust to be out with the day
At light's first forewarning,
 When the winds are all whist
 And the magic of mist
Is over the shine of the morning !

DUMB IN JUNE

VII

A SONG OF LIFE

A song, boys, a song !
Life is young yet,
Love has tongue yet ;
Why should Life and Love go wrong ?
Come, boys, a song !

A song, boys, a song !
Life's at flush still,
Love's ablush still ;
What though cares and curses throng ?
Come, boys, a song !

A song, boys, a song !
Life is gray now,
Love's away now,
We are left to limp along ;
Still, boys, a song !

A SONG OF LIFE

A song, boys, a song!
Death is here soon,
Death will cheer soon,
Death is nigh, and Love is strong ;
So, boys, a song !

SONNETS



THE SPIRIT

If so there were a spirit, poised in peace
Above all wind-gusts in the heavens high,
And he might mark us mortals laugh or
cry,

According as the gloomèd clouds increase
Or suns beguile them into golden fleece ;
Methinks he would be like to smile, to sigh
(So placid he, so far within the sky,
And knowing God's great love can never
cease),

That we the puny yet the prideful race
Must change as skies change ; be like babes
that fret

Whenso their yearning mother moves her
breast

To ease her mothering, or turns her face
Aside a moment, reaching out to get
Some wrapping soft to lull their limbs to
rest.

DUMB IN JUNE

AN UNPRAISED PICTURE

I saw a picture once by Angelo.

“Unfinished,” said the critic ; “done
in youth ;”

And that was all, no thought of praise,
forsooth !

He was informed, and doubtless it was so.

And yet, I let an hour of dreaming go

The way of all time, touched to tears and
ruth,

Passion and joy, the prick of conscience’
tooth,

Before that careworn Christ’s divine, soft
glow.

The painter’s yearning with an unsure
hand

Had moved me more than might his mas-
ter days ;

He seemed to speak like one whose Mec-
ca-land

Is first beheld, though faint and far the
ways ;

Who may not then his shaken voice com-
mand,

Yet trembles forth a word of prayer and
praise.

WOOD WITCHERY

WOOD WITCHERY

The way ran under boughs of checkered
green

Where live things stirred, and sweet lights
glinted through,

And airs were cool and scented ; well I
knew

It was New England, but this fresh
demesne

Was full of fabled folk no eye hath seen,

Yet every poet's heart must take for true :

Dryads and hamadryads, satyrs too,

And fountain-nymphs, and trolls of freakish
mien.

Then, like a flash, the oneness of the world
Broke on me ; mythland was not here or
there,

But wheresoe'er shy Fancy had unfurled

Her wings, perceiving Nature young and
fair ;

New England spelt but Arcady, the same

Unaging beauty by another name.

DUMB IN JUNE

DESERTED FARMS

Aforetime, fruitfulness and tilth were here.
Snug granges held the harvests, acres broad
Were rich in grass and grain ; the good-
man's board
Groaned with its plenty, and a rustic cheer
Sat in the homesteads sprinkled far and near.
To-day, prosperity no more is lord ;
Choked wells, roofs fallen, weed-grown
ways afford
A vision desolate and a memory drear.
Sons of New England, your ingratitude,
Like that once shown to tragic Lear, is
base !
For now ye scorn the teeming mother-
breast
That gave you strength, and in a vagrant
mood
Will turn to alien meadows of the West,
Or toward the peopled cities set your face.

REALISTS

REALISTS

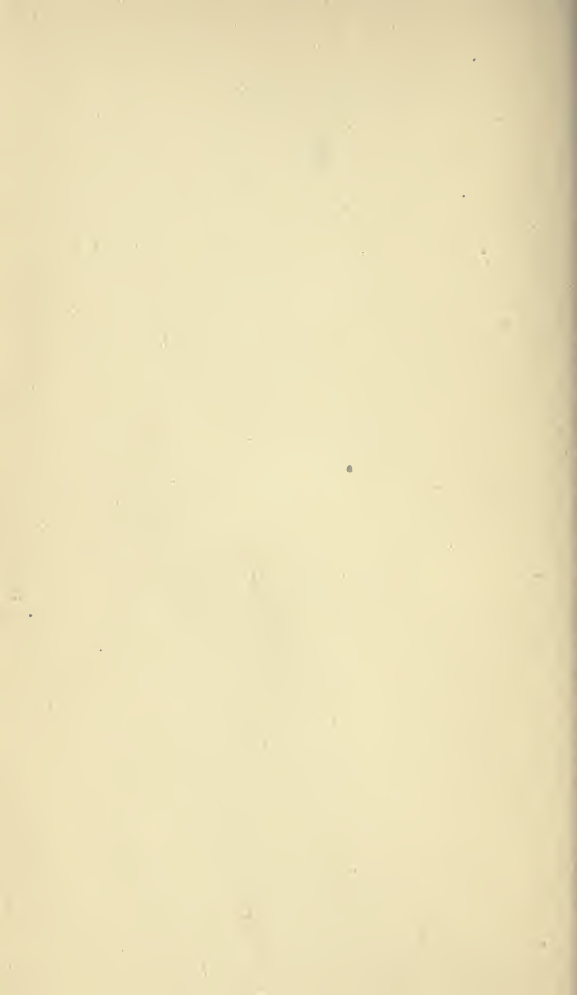
They peer at life with analytic eyes,
And paint so patiently each several scene,
You vow that naught is wrong, each shade
and sheen

Set on the canvas in full faithful wise.
And yet it looks amiss, the picture lies —
You hardly know wherein or how, I ween,
For skies are blue, the summer grass is
green,
The men and women walk of proper size.

Once I beheld a group of sorrowing men
Who bent above the death-mask of a maid.
The lines of the loved face were doubtless
there,
But as each looked he started back again
As from a stranger, chilled and half afraid.
Her features lacked the soul had made them
fair.

BLANK VERSE





IN SLEEP

Not drowsihood and dreams and mere
idless,
Nor yet the blessedness of strength regained,
Alone are in what men call sleep. The
past,
My unsuspected soul, my parents' voice,
The generations of my forebears, yea,
The very will of God himself are there
And potent-working : so that many a doubt
Is wiped away at daylight, many a soil
Washed cleanlier, many a puzzle riddled
plain.
Strong, silent forces push my puny self
Towards unguessed issues, and the waking
man
Rises a Greatheart where a Slave lay down.

THE LOST ATLANTIS

Deep in our soul-seas there are sunken
hopes
That once gleamed marble-white, pure
shafts of stone
With carvings thereupon of cryptic joy

DUMB IN JUNE

Long, long forgotten ; streets submerged,
that erst
Were brave with every sign of festal life ;
And scented groves that stand for dreams ;
and near,
Great towers stately builded, palaces
For pleasure-making when the time was
May ;
All dim in tangles of mermaid's hair.
The traffic of a world of elder time
Choked potently by water, and engirt
With grewsome shapes and growths
beneath the brine.

Deep in our soul-seas, drowned ; while
present waves
Glide smoothly o'er the lost Atlantis, once
So regnant in our Past ; and summer sails
Fleet onward toward new Western isles,
since man
Must ever gear him for new quests, and
leave
The mute memorials of the lapsèd years.

SPIRITS OF SUMMER

SPIRITS OF SUMMER

Three creatures of the summer are to me
Of spirit import. First, the milkweed dun,
Diaphanous, most insubstantial wight
Of plantkind — satin seeds in silken sheaths
The winter long, a memory, not a flower
That reckons bloom and fragrance as its
due.

Then the white birch, a ghost amongst its
mates

I' the forest, glimmering-boled and phan-
tom-tall,

Crowned with a largess of most glossy
leaves.

And last, the thrush, wood-hid, aloof and
lone,

A disembodied voice, a phantasy,
That shapes the plastic soul to higher
things.

Three summer creatures good to know and
love.

DUMB IN JUNE

MORTIS DIGNITAS

Here lies a common man. His horny hands,
Crossed meekly as a maid's upon his breast,
Show marks of toil, and by his general
dress

You judge him to have been an artisan.
Doubtless, could all his life be written out,
The story would not thrill nor start a tear ;
He worked, laughed, loved, and suffered in
his time,

And now rests peacefully, with upturned
face

Whose look belies all struggle in the past.
A homely tale : yet, trust me, I have seen
The greatest of the earth go stately by,
While shouting multitudes beset the way,
With less of awe. The gap between a king
And me, a nameless gazer in the crowd,
Seemed not so wide as that which stretches
now

Betwixt us two, this dead one and myself.
Untitled, dumb, and deedless, yet he is
Transfigured by a touch from out the skies
Until he wears, with all-unconscious grace,
The strange and sudden Dignity of Death.

VOICES

VOICES

A man died yesternight. To-day the town
Makes mention of his taking-off, and sums
His virtues and his failings. On the street,
Midst many barterings and lures of trade,
In homes where he was known, in busy
marts,

Or public places where the commonweal
Gathers the town-folk : up and down his
name

Is spoke of, in as various ways of speech
As are the voices various sounding it :
Gruff-throated bass, shrill treble of old age,
Soft sibilancy of a woman's tongue,
Or reed-like utterance of a little child.

Thus one, his mate in business : " Ah ! a
shrewd

Dry head was that ; much loss to us, much
loss.

And as for heart " — wise shrug of shoul-
ders now —

" Well, 'tis but little quoted here on
'change."

Another, who had summered with him once
In leisure-time : " A right good fellow gone !

DUMB IN JUNE

'Tis true, he liked his ease ; but who does not ?

For me, give me the man that Horace loved,
Who deemed it wise to fool when season-
able."

A tiny one who oft had found great store
Of sweetmeats in his hand, and, prized far
less,

Great store of tenderness within his heart :

" Oh, won't he come and see us any more ? "

His surpliced pastor, bound to save his soul,
Balanced a bit by inconsistencies

He thought he saw, in private to his wife :

" Alas, poor soul ! if only he had grasped
That matter of the creed, and made us sure !
But then — his heart was right, and God is
good."

And one, a woman who had found his arms
An all-protecting shelter through long
years,

Said naught, but kissed the tokens he had
left,

And dreamt of heaven for his sake alone.

Meanwhile, what was this man, and what
his place ?

You ask, confused by all this Babel talk
Of here and yonder, from his fellow-men.

MASKS

I am as ignorant as any one
Whose speech you heard, and yet I loved
him well.
Nay, ask me not : ask only God. He
knows.

MASKS

A certain friend of mine, whose daily praise
Was in the mouths of men, once startled
me
By what he said when I, like all the rest,
Cried up his virtues and his blameless life.
In this wise speaking : " Stop ! you mad-
den me.
You and the crowd but look to what I do,
And when you find me righteous and the
law
Ne'er broken, why, you make a loud ac-
claim,
Holding me guiltless and a perfect man.
But tell me, friend, whether of two is best :
To let a spite eat slowly to the heart,
Making no outward sign, rebelling not,
Or, by an honest spurt of wrathful blood,
To mass the hate of many brooding years
Into one right-arm blow, and so be quits ?

DUMB IN JUNE

To speak in terms immaculate and nice,
Yet curse in speechless thoughts, to clean
forswear

All lewdness, yet go lusting secretly?
To render weight for weight, yet grudge
the coin

Flung to a beggar-lad — in brief, to find
My soul the nesting-place for divers sins,
And still walk on in smug and seemly
guise?

I tell thee, there are times I hear a voice
Say very clear, though softly, in myself:
‘’Twere better if you sinned right openly
Than let the vileness stew within your mind
And pass your properness upon the world,
Knowing the while the arch hypocrisy
That takes the name of angel where, in-
stead,

Devil hits nearer to the truth.’ Ah me!’’
Here, staying words, he sighed a heavy
sigh;

And, musing, on I strolled, debating how
Mere masking tricks us all, and somewhat
sad

To learn the inner history of one
Whose common title with the world was
saint.

THE BLEAK O' THE YEAR

THE BLEAK O' THE YEAR

There is a time of subtle browns, and grays
That run to silverings, and tremulous greens,
And russet tints, and ash-pale pools of
leaves ;

Of ghostly mosses and elusive grass
That's neither lush nor dead ; of naked trees
Ineffably harmonious with the sky
That stretches vast and neutral, tone on
tone,

Not to be called a color, but a thought.
To some this is a barren time, a sleep
Between the winter and the spell of spring ;
To me it is the heart's own time and tide,
Being hidden from the heedless eye that
lusts

For flaring lights and sunset dyes, yet
charged
With secrets rare, and blendings into
dreams,

And ecstasies divine that shadow forth
A mystery, the Selah of the Soul.

DUMB IN JUNE

EARLY WINTER

Brown grass, picked out with red of bushes,
tones

Of silver on the fences ; russet, bronze,
The leaves of oaks and beeches ; mystic
black

Where pools of water lie, and edged there-
round

The ghostly glamour of the shallow ice.

Above, a gray-white monody of sky,
And all between the heaven and earth a
mist

Of fine, fast-falling snow that makes a veil
Wherethrough you see a mystery, a blend
Of winter colors to a perfect whole
That lifts the heart with beauty, does atone
For long-withholden loveliness of June.

THE INAPPRECIABLE YEARS

THE INAPPRECIABLE YEARS

Like snow that falls on water seem the
years,
The inappreciable years that melt away
Into Time's welter — yet, unseen, the tide
Is swelled thereby, and haply some good
ship
Floated across the sand-bars into port
That means smooth haven and a sight of
home.

THE ULTIMATE

When, of old, a chief died in the North,
Then they wrapt him close in fighting dress,
Laid his life-worn weapons him beside,
And, with stern and silent tenderness,
In a boat wide-bosomed on the tide,
Placed his death-cold body, pushed him
forth

Thence to drift at will of wind and fate,
Till at last he found the Ultimate.

Amplly weaponed so, with courage grim,
Prone along my death-boat, like to him
I would day-long rock and roam and wait
For a subtle turn of tide and sea,
For a gust o' wind to break and blow
Love and land and life away from me ;
Favoring, until I glide and go
Past each bourn and billow-boundary
To the waters lying round my fate,
To the windless, unoaded Ultimate.



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